

# Sign up to the New Health Charter

The Scottish pig industry is highlighting its ongoing commitment to animal health and welfare by supporting the creation of a Scottish Pig Health Charter.

The level of support for the creation of the new Charter was evident at the QMS pig conference held at Kingennie in Dundee at the end of 2015, when the Scottish pig producers attending were 100% united in their commitment to support it.

Allan Ward, Pig Specialist with QMS, commented: "The Charter will enable rapid response through the Scottish Pig Disease Control Centre (SPDCC) to diseases such as PEDv, in order to control and limit the spread. It will also establish the health profiles of units in different areas and geographically map the regional distribution of diseases."



Allan Ward, Pig Specialist at QMS.

He added: "The Charter is part of the Scottish Pig Health Scheme that will enable the industry to further improve pig health and productivity, and we hope that all our commercial Scottish pig producers will sign up to it."

One producer who is very supportive of the new Charter is Roderic Bruce, who farms 750 acres and has a 360-sow unit at Logierieve, near Ellon, in Aberdeenshire. His Large White cross Landrace sows produce pigs both for finishing and for replacements in the unit. He said: "We rear 30 pigs per sow per year and retain 150 gilts for the breeding unit while the rest are sold through Quality Pork Limited (QPL) at Brechin." Roderic also grows winter wheat, spring and winter barley, and oilseed rape on the farm, which are all - to some extent - included in the pig rations.

Roderic is chairman of QPL, which is a collaborative business between Scottish pig farmers through Scotlean and Scottish Pig Producers and Tulip UK Ltd. They took over the Brechin site from AP Jess in 2014, and, with the help of a £2.7 million Food Processing Marketing Co-operation (FPMC) grant from the Scottish government, have invested a total of £10 million to significantly upgrade existing facilities.

According to Roderic, the plant is performing well, but the problem at the moment is that supply is outstripping demand and the price has dropped to 113p/kg, which, he said, is perilously close to the cost of production. Roderic pointed out that Scotland has an advantage over other countries because the pig producers have a wider geographical spread and lower stocking density, which gives them the opportunity to have healthier herds. Like several other producers, he did a partial de-population last year, which has given his finishing unit a massive boost, reducing costs and allowing him to survive the recent dip in prices.

The partial "de-pop", as it is known, involved taking all the growing pigs off site and cleaning and resting the buildings before populating them with the next lot of growing pigs.

Roderic said: "I was delighted to eliminate Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome (PPRS) and enzootic pneumonia, but the real difference has been on the production side. The feed conversion ratio has improved from 2.5 kg of feed per kg of liveweight gain to 2.3 kg, which makes the unit more efficient."

The knock-on effect of this is that the pigs in the finishing unit are approaching 1kg/day liveweight gain, which means they reach their finished weight of 115kg or 85kg deadweight three weeks earlier than before the partial de-pop. The use of antibiotics is now minimal on the unit.

Roderic is delighted with the result of the partial de-pop in his herd and said: "High health has huge potential for the Scottish pig industry, and the new Scottish Pig Health Charter can only help."

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## LOGIERIEVE SOW UNIT: AT A GLANCE

Run by  
**Roderic Bruce**  
at Logierieve, near  
Ellon,  
Aberdeenshire

Roderic  
farms  
**750**  
acres

**360**  
sow unit

Rears  
**30 pigs**  
per sow, per year